

Lone & Out-of-Hours Working

Lone working is defined as working unaccompanied for a sustained period of time without immediate physical access to assistance from a colleague and in an area where personnel are not frequently passing through.

Out-of-hours is defined as any time outwith the normal working hours of 8.30am to 5.30pm, Monday to Friday.

Policy

SLS requires all personnel to employ careful planning and disciplined working arrangements to reduce instances of lone/out-of-hours working to a minimum. In situations where lone/out-of-hours working cannot be avoided, steps must be taken to ensure the safety of the workers.

Arrangements

- a) Line Managers - including Research Group Leaders, Academic Teaching Staff and Clerical/Technical Staff Team Managers - are responsible for ensuring that in all instances of lone/out-of-hours work undertaken by their team/group members (including undergraduate summer and project students), the risks are carefully considered and appropriate control measures are assigned to minimise these risks. (The standard SLS work activity risk assessment form has been adapted to include a section for stipulating additional controls required when working alone and/or outwith normal working hours. This is in preference to having a separate assessment form specifically for lone/out-of-hours activities.)
- b) Line Managers are also responsible for ensuring that only fully competent and able personnel undertake lone/out-of-hours work. To assist in this process, all personnel preparing to undertake lone/out-of-hours work *for the first time* must read the Lone & Out-of-Hours Worker's Information Sheet and complete a Lone & Out-of-Hours Worker's Questionnaire and submit this to their Line Manager. The Line Manager must address any negative responses before giving permission for the lone/out-of-hours work to proceed. Completed questionnaires and any associated records must be retained by the Line Manager for as long as the worker is a member of their team/group.
- c) Personnel preparing to undertake lone/out-of-hours work are expected to participate in the risk assessment process and read and sign all risk assessments relevant to their work activities. While undertaking lone/out-of-hours work, personnel must implement all control measures specified in the relevant risk assessment(s).
- d) If a supervisor is appointed to oversee out-of-hours work, the worker's Line Manager must ensure the appointee is competent to do so and fully aware of the relevant risk assessment(s) and their responsibilities.
- e) If the risks cannot be adequately controlled, i.e. reduced to a level where they are rated by the assessor as low, the activity must be restricted to normal working hours and/or normal working conditions when full support and access to assistance is readily available.
- f) Monitoring mechanisms for lone/out-of-hours work are as follows.
 - Inspection of risk assessments and checklists during regular, general H&S inspections.
 - Analysis of feedback from lone/out-of-hours workers and security staff.

Lone and Out-of Hours Workers' Information Sheet

- In instances of lone working the major concern is that the worker becomes ill or is injured to the extent where they are unable to summon assistance. If they go undiscovered for a period of time their condition may deteriorate, perhaps to the point where it is fatal. Remember, lone working does not necessarily occur outwith normal working hours
- Out-of-hours working is not necessarily done alone. The two major concerns are:
 1. The absence of support in the event of an incident, accident or other emergency. Lab Managers, Fire Wardens, First Aiders, Radiation Protection Supervisors and Safety Services staff are not normally on site outwith normal working hours.
 2. The likelihood of intruders, or other undesirables, being present in and around the building is higher outwith normal working hours, especially during the hours of darkness, so the risk of violent attacks on personnel increases.
- The highest risk scenario, and therefore the one that gives greatest cause for concern, is when the work is done alone and out-of-hours.
- Some key control measures designed to ensure the safety of lone/out-of-hours workers are detailed below. Are they being implemented in your area? If not you should raise this with your Line Manager or a member of SLS Health & Safety Personnel.
 - Lone workers must receive adequate training and instruction, especially in security, emergency and spill procedures.
 - Line Managers should carefully assess the need for supervision of out-of-hours work, taking the workers level of experience and competency into account. Appointed supervisors must be experienced and fully competent.
 - Where formal supervision is not necessary, operate a buddy system, i.e. an arrangement is made between colleagues to check in with each other at regular intervals, especially on arrival and prior to leaving the building.
 - Workers must make sure at least one person knows where they are working and when to expect them home (in the case of out-of hours work) or back in the main lab (in the case of lone working during normal hours). If the worker does not return when expected their contact, without putting themselves at risk, should attempt to confirm that the worker is safe and well. If there is cause for concern, alert a senior member of SLS staff or University Security immediately.
 - All workers must keep an Emergency Numbers Card with their swipe/proximity card and carry both cards on their person while at work.
 - Workers are advised to carry charged mobile phones, programmed with University emergency telephone numbers.
 - Workers must avoid carrying out operations that carry a medium or high risk of harm – for example: handling large volumes of flammables; working with very toxic substances; performing reactions that may be vigorous or hard to control; working with sources of ignition; working with asphyxiant gas; handling heavy objects; working with large amounts of radioactive substances. Restrict such steps to normal working hours or assign additional controls to reduce the risk.

Lone and Out-of Hours Workers' Questionnaire

- All personnel preparing to undertake lone/out-of-hours work **for the first time** must read the attached Lone and Out-of Hours Workers' Information Sheet, then complete the following questionnaire and submit it to their Line Manager.
- Line Managers must address any negative responses before giving permission for the worker to proceed.
- Completed questionnaires and any associated records must be retained by the Line Manager.

1. Are you medically fit for lone working? <i>Conditions repeatedly causing sudden attacks that leave the individual unconscious, disorientated or requiring urgent medical attention, may rule out lone working.</i>	Yes / No (delete as applicable)
2. Do you consider yourself sufficiently experienced and competent to work alone and/or outwith normal working hours? <i>Read the Lone & Out-of Hours Workers Information Sheet before answering this question.</i>	Yes / No
3. Does your supervisor agree with the above?	Yes / No
4. If you feel threatened, become ill or are injured do you know how to quickly summon emergency assistance, i.e. do you know the University Emergency Contact numbers and the location of the nearest phone? <i>Your Lab Manager/H&S Adviser can supply you with an Emergency Numbers card.</i>	Yes / No
5. If you become ill or injured to the extent where you are unable to call for help and are at risk of going undiscovered for some time, or if you become trapped somewhere in the building, e.g. in a lift, will someone realise that you are missing, i.e. notice that you have not returned home/to the lab when expected?	Yes / No
6. Can you avoid working in areas/rooms where you may become trapped (e.g. cold rooms, stairwells, basement corridors, lifts) or where it may be difficult for emergency assistance to reach you (e.g. secure areas with coded locks)?	Yes / No
7. If you have a chemical/biological/radioactive spill do you know how to deal with it? <i>Spill procedures are detailed in the SLS SOP Database. See your Lab Manager/H&S Adviser for further details.</i>	Yes / No
8. Do you know what to do if a fire breaks out or if the fire alarm sounds? <i>The Fire procedure is detailed on the SLS H&S web site. See your Lab Manager/H&S Adviser for further details.</i>	Yes / No
9. Do you know your emergency exit routes, your fire assembly point and who to report to outwith normal working hours? <i>As above.</i>	Yes / No
10. Have you read and signed the relevant risk assessment(s) and are you equipped to apply all the necessary control measures? <i>Risk assessments are held in the SLS Risk Assessment Database. See your Lab Manager/H&S Adviser for further details.</i>	Yes / No
11. Do you know the safest entrances, exits, car parks and routes to use in out-of-hours situations?	Yes / No
12. Are you aware of the steps you should take to preserve the security of the building? <i>Security procedures are detailed on the SLS H&S web site. See your Lab Manager/H&S Adviser for further details.</i>	Yes / No
13. Do you know how to deal with suspected intruders/break-ins? <i>As above.</i>	Yes / No
14. Do you know who to report accidents, incidents and near misses to? <i>This must be done at the earliest opportunity.</i>	Yes / No